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## **Community Invited to Blair Hall Reopening Celebration**

*Apr-19-2006*

Nearly two years ago, residents of Charleston and surrounding areas provided overwhelming support to the Eastern Illinois University community as it dealt with the tragic near-destruction by fire of its historic Blair Hall.

The university now invites its supporters back for a celebratory dedication of the renovated structure - the third oldest building on Eastern's campus, completed just south of Old Main in 1913.

A brief ceremony, scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. Monday, April 24, on the east side of the building, will feature comments from President Lou Hencken; EIU trustee Julie Nimmons; faculty representative Janet Cosbey; Will Hine, dean of Eastern's School of Continuing Education; Student Body President Ryan Berger; and Charleston Mayor John Inyart. Seating will be limited; however, plenty of standing room will be available.

Following the program, the building's occupants will provide tours until 6:30 p.m.

The three-story, limestone masonry and wood structure suffered extensive damage in the accidental fire, which began during the mid-afternoon of April 28, 2004. Fortunately, the building was safely evacuated and no injuries were reported.

It was determined, however, that the roof structure and the third floor of Blair Hall were destroyed, and that extensive water damage to the first and second floors necessitated "gutting" those areas. The building's "shell," or exterior walls, the corridor flooring and the structure's load-bearing walls were determined to be salvageable.

Most of the nearly 65 occupants of the building -- moved to temporary offices in on- and off-campus locations during the past 24 months -- recently returned to the renovated structure. Offices and new locations are as follows:

- First Floor: The Graduate School dean's office and certification office; and the Offices of Minority Affairs, International Programs, Study Abroad and Research and Sponsored Programs.
- Second Floor: Office of General Counsel, Eastern's Bachelor of Arts in General Studies Degree Program, the Center for Continuing Professional Development, the Office of Off-Campus and Contract Credit Programs and the School of Continuing Education 's dean's office. (The Gateway Program will move from Ninth Street Hall to Blair Hall on May 8.)
- Third Floor: African-American Studies and Eastern's Department of Sociology/Anthropology.

Phone numbers and e-mail addresses for the affected offices and employees are expected to remain unchanged.